



School Improvement

Guidance Handbook For Navigating The Green Mountain Star System 2013-2014

August 8, 2013



Table Contents

Introduction:	3
Welcome:	3
Section 1: Technical Features of the Green Mountain Star Software	4
Getting Started:.....	4
LOG ON TO: www.indistar.org	4
DASHBOARD	4
MAIN MENU	5
Resources and Reports	6
Register School.....	8
Assess Indicators to Create a Plan	9
Creating A Plan.....	10
Monitor School Plan.....	14
Section 2: Tools for the Green Mountain Star Process.....	17
Meeting Norms	17
Managing the Work	17
Guidance for Creating the School Plan	20
Frequently Asked Questions	23
Write a Goal Statement for Each Cluster.....	25
Practice Assessing an Indicator for Schools Using the Rapid Improvement Indicators.....	28
Access Level Descriptions	30
Check the Work.....	32
Cluster Similar Indicators	34
Indicators in Action	35

Introduction:

Green Mountain Star (GMS) is a web-based continuous improvement tool for schools and districts that is based on a comprehensive list of indicators, which have been researched extensively. These indicators are linked to the most sound and effective educational practices taking place in schools across the nation. The software and its components are located online and managed by the Academic Development Institute (ADI), host of the Center on Innovation and Improvement (www.indistar.org).

Welcome:

In the handbook the team will find instructions to help you get started on the process of using Green Mountain Star's online tools and resources. Information will include:

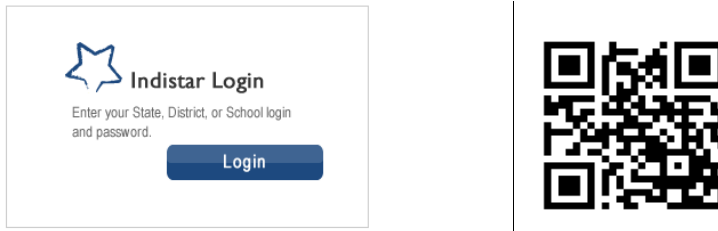
- ✓ Navigating the key features of the system
- ✓ How to assess, create, and monitor a school improvement plan
- ✓ Tools and resources to assist school teams throughout the process
- ✓ Imbedded QR codes for users to access web pages associated with the Green Mountain Star process using a smart phone or tablet

Section 1: Technical Features of the Green Mountain Star Software

Getting Started:

LOG ON TO: www.indistar.org

- In the center panel of the home page, scroll down and click the **Indistar login.** (*Indistar* is the system on which *Green Mountain Star* is based.)



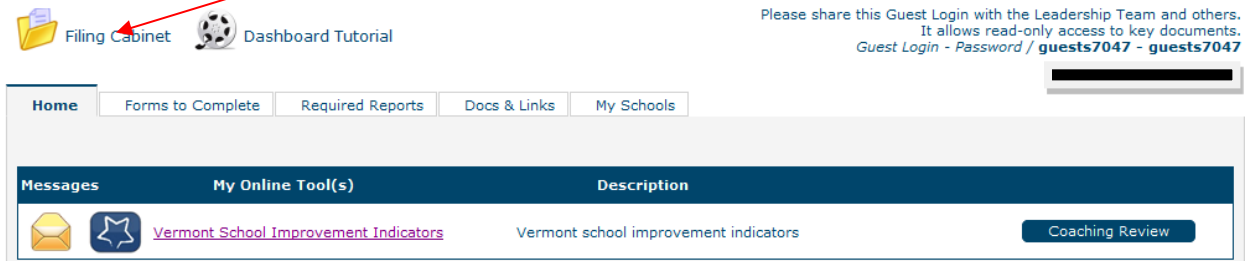
At the login screen enter the following:

Username: vtsample

Password: vtsample

DASHBOARD You've arrived at the "Vermont Support for School Improvement" page. Take time to orientate yourself to the functions available to you on the dashboard.

For example, the "**Filing Cabinet**" allows schools to upload files to the system.



Other features include:

Forms to Complete: There are some federal and state requirements that are not covered under the Indicators. If applicable, states include questions related to these federal requirements on the forms listed under the Forms to Complete Section. A school opens the forms from the links provided, fills in the questions, and saves the forms.

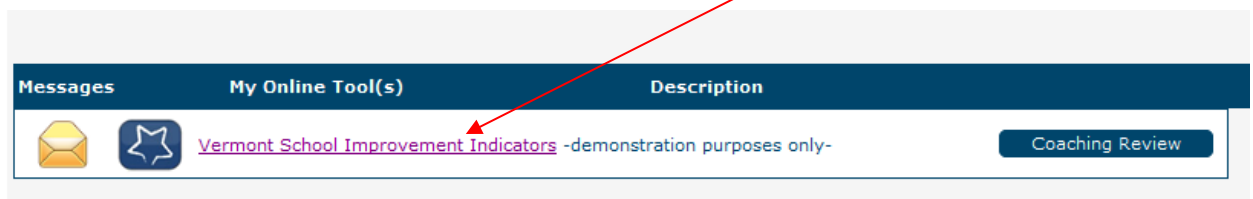
Required Reports: This tab on the dashboard is where schools and districts submit final approved plans to the Vermont Agency of Education.

Docs & Links: Schools and districts will find additional resources under this tab to support schools throughout the process.

My Schools: Districts, coaches, and state coordinators can use this feature to access school accounts.

Coaching Review: This feature provides a summary report of information for each school. The review shows the number of meetings held, number of indicators assessed and planned, number of coaching comments, forms submitted, and leadership team information.

- The first step is to select your school by selecting your school's dashboard.
- Once your school loads on the page, continue the tour by selecting Vermont School Improvement Indicators. This will bring the user to the "Main Menu."



MAIN MENU: You are now on the Main Menu for an individual school.

North River High School School Leadership RI
Green Mountain Supervisory Union, VT

[Edit School Information](#)

Principal
Ms. Eden Lamoille - elamoille@gmsvut.edu
Process Manager
Mr. Lincoln Stowe - lstowe@gmsvut.edu

****A Coaching Comment was added 7/18/2012**

Assess
School Indicators
Last Update: 06/30/12
Progress: 1 of 55

Monitor
School Plan
Last Update:
Progress: 0 of 0

Create
School Plan
Last Update:
Progress: 0 of 1

Coaching Comments

Where Are We Now?

Help

School Team 06/30/12

Demographics

Assessment

Mrs. Lisa Mazitelli
Consultant to School
lisa.mazitelli@state.vt.us

Mr. School Demonstration - Site
District Liaison
x@email.com

For technical questions concerning this tool contact us at Indistar@adl.org

There are multiple key features that are accessible on the Main Menu:



Coaching Comments: This tab allows coaches and district staff to write comments related to the school improvement process, as well as, school teams to respond to coaches. **Note*** Superintendents will use this tab to state that they have reviewed and approved the plan when it is finished.

Where Are We Now? Allows school teams to collect and analyze data in Green Mountain Star.

Help: Allows school teams to search for specific answers to questions about the Green Mountain Star system.



School Team: This tab allows schools to provide information on school personnel who are involved in the school improvement process. Schools can also add teams (i.e. Literacy team) to the school improvement team if a group of individuals will be working on specific tasks related to the school improvement process.

Demographics: Allows schools to enter information about their school.

Assessment: Schools can enter relevant assessment data (i.e. NECAP scores) in this tab.

Plan Your Meeting: This tab allows the user to access meeting schedules and worksheets.

Vermont Support for School Improvement
Main Menu

Resources & Reports Plan Your Meeting

Resources and Reports: Allows access to information that supports the school improvement process.

For example, Click on the tab in the upper right corner, **Resources and Reports**. Select **Resources**.

Select the tab, Indicators, Wise Ways, Rubrics.

- In the **Level** box, choose School.
- In the **Group** box, choose Vermont School Improvement Indicators


Indicators, Wise Ways, and Rubrics System Instructions and Tutorials Other Resources

Step 1: Select a Level to view.
Select Level: School ▼

Step 2: Select a group of Indicators to view.
Select Group: Vermont School Improvement Indicators (RI) ▼

Complete Indicator List

This window allows the user to see the Vermont Core Indicators by section or in a list. For this tour, practice exporting the list of indicators.

- To the right of the **Group** box, click on Complete Indicator List. An “indicators report” window opens showing the full list of indicators. Please note that there are two pages. Use the blue arrow at the **top** of the page to access the second page. To export a copy of that list, locate the small disk icon  just below the dark blue banner to the right of the page navigation symbols. This is the **EXPORT** icon.
- In the dropdown menu to the right of the EXPORT icon, select WORD or Acrobat (PDF).

The list of indicators opens in a new window on your computer. If you wish, you can select **SAVE AS** and save this list to your computer. Give the file a title you’ll remember.

Exit out of the export window by clicking **CLOSE** in the upper right. This returns you to the **Resources** page.

- Return to the School Main Menu page by clicking the School Process Main or Back to Main Menu rectangle at the upper right. Always use these functions when returning to the main menu as opposed to your browser’s back button.



- To see a complete list of the types of reports available in the Green Mountain Star system, go to the Resources & Reports tab. Click on Reports

- The Report Menu will provide you with a list of reports available in the system.

North River High School
Green Mountain Supervisory Union, VT

School Process Main

Hints Help

Report Menu

Step 1. School Registration	This report holds registration information for the school, principal, and process manager.
Step 2. School Information	Here you will see the demographic, personnel and enrollment information as entered by the school.
School Assessment	This report shows assessment information for state and standardized tests as entered by the school.
Step 3. School Team Members	Information pertaining to the members of the School Improvement Team including the principal, the process manager, and others chosen from the school or community to be part of the leadership team is displayed here.
Step 4. List of Indicators Included in Plan	This report holds a list of all assessed indicators that will be included in your plan.
Detailed Report of Assessed Indicators	This report shows each assessed indicator, including its level of development, opportunity and priority scores, as well as evidence of current implementation.
Step 5. List of Objectives Included in Plan	Here you will find a list of all objectives included in the plan.
Detailed Report of Objectives Included in Plan	This report holds a list of all objectives, the index score, target date, and team member assigned to it, as well as a description of what the fully implemented objective will look like.
Step 6. Tasks Report	The Task Report gives detailed information for all tasks including the assigned team member and target date for completion.
Progress Report	This report gives information about the created plan including the number and status of tasks for each objective, the assigned team member, as well as the target date for completion.
Comprehensive Plan Report	Here you will see a detailed description of the improvement plan including all assessments, plans, tasks, monitoring and implementation information.
Indicator Checklist Report	This is a customizable report that allows one to choose individual indicators and displays all information for assessments, plans, and tasks for each indicator selected.
Implementation and Monitoring Report	Here you will see a comprehensive list of only those indicators that were initially assessed as fully implemented or those indicators for which a plan has been created.
Coaching Comments	This report displays the conversational tool designed for districts to receive and respond to helpful tips and comments from their coach.
Where are we now?	This report gives an overview of the schools execution of its plan in graph form, as well as a list of fully implemented and completed indicators
Summary Report	This report displays summary information such as the number of meetings held, numbers of indicators assessed and planned, number of coaching comments, and forms submitted, as well as district leadership team information.
- new - Improvement Plan Report	This report is a minimized version of the Comprehensive Report, omitting the details of the tasks.

Register School: Green Mountain Star will import school information into the system for each school. However, it is important that each school check the accuracy of information and make any necessary changes or edits to their school profile.

North River High School
Green Mountain Supervisory Union, VT

School Leadership RI

Edit School Information

Principal
Ms. Eden Lamoille - elamoille@gmsuvt.edu
Process Manager
Mr. Lincoln Stowe - lstowe@gmsuvt.edu

**Note: When emails are sent via the system (Coaching comments or other updates), they are received by the individuals listed on this page, the Principal and Process Manager.*

It is important to have a current email address for the principal and process manager as this is the way the system communicates when a coaching comment is added or a login reminder must be sent. **Be sure to hit the "Save" button after any changes are made.**

Vermont Agency of Education

Vermont
School Registration

School Process Main

North River High School
Complete the following School Registration Information.

[Hints](#) [Help](#)

You must have School-level access (principal & process manager) to make changes to this page.
Other levels of access (state, district, coach) may view this page, but any changes to content cannot be saved.

School Information Registered - 06/19/2012

School Name: North River High School

Address: 456 River Road

City: Champlain State: VT Zip: 05600

Phone: 1-802-456-7891 Fax: 1-802-456-1234 Website:

School Principal

☐ Dr. ☐ Mr. ☒ Ms. ☐ Mrs. First name: Eden Last name: Lamolle

Phone: 1-802-456-7891 Fax: 1-802-456-1234

Email: elamolle@gmsvvt.edu

☒ **School Process Manager** (if other than the School Principal)
The Process Manager is responsible for overseeing the process at the School Level.

☐ Dr. ☒ Mr. ☐ Ms. ☐ Mrs. First name: Lincoln Last name: Stowe

Position: Assistant Principal

Phone: 802 789 1234 Fax:

Email: lstowe@gmsvvt.edu

School Type: High School
District Liaison: Mr. School Demonstration - Site

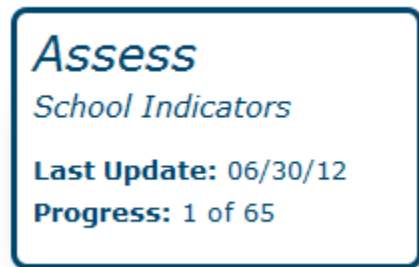
[Save](#)

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Assess Indicators to Create a Plan

To assess VT Core Indicators in Green Mountain Star.

- Click on “Assess School Indicators” (see screenshot below).



- School teams will now be able to work on assessing VT Core Indicators that apply to their status in AYP progression.

- To display *VT Key Indicators* only, click on the following box in the screenshot below:

Key Indicators

1. Select Indicators 2. List of Indicators to Assess 3. List of Indicators Assessed 4. Assess Indicator

Filter(s) Choose a filter to narrow your search. ☒ Key Indicators only

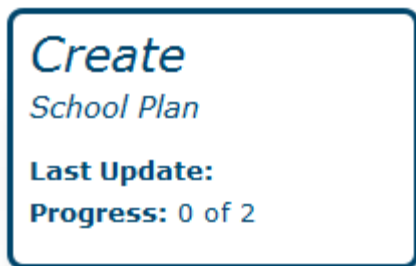
apply Indicator Filter remove filter

- When ready, click on the tab “List of indicators to Assess” or select from a “section column” to begin.

Category	Section	Subsection I	Subsection II	Assessed
School Improvement Core Indicators	Continuous Improvement			0 of 1
	Leadership			0 of 1
	Curriculum and Instruction			0 of 2
	Use of Data			0 of 2
	Professional Teaching Culture			0 of 2
	Student Supports			0 of 1
	School Climate			0 of 1

Once the team has completed the assessment of current practices using the *Green Mountain Star* system, the results will provide a measure of priority for creating a plan that targets effective practices for improving student learning.

Creating A Plan



When ready, click on – *Create School Plan*

The school plan page will load as shown:

Vermont
Create School Plan

School Process Main

North River High School

HintsHelp

The indicators that you have chosen to include in your plan are stated below as objectives. They will be referred to as "objectives" through the remainder of the process. Select objective to create and assign tasks for the School Plan.

Objectives shown in Blue are included in the plan and have tasks that are not complete.
Objectives shown in Green have all the tasks completed and the Objective has been met.
Objectives shown in Red need a task added or you were undecided if the Objective has been met.

☐ Hide completed plans

Display All Objectives
Select Group of Objectives to Display

All Objectives

School Plan (1 total objectives) *Note: Index = Priority Score x Opportunity Score

ID	Objectives	Added Date	*Index	Assigned to	Target Date	Tasks
UD07	Teachers will individualize instruction based on pre-test results to provide support for some students and enhanced learning opportunities for others. (94)	6/30/2012	3			0

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Begin creating your plan by clicking on the objective that you would like to work on first. In this sample screenshot (above), North River High School will be creating a plan for Indicator/Objective UD07.

Vermont
Create School Plan

School Process Main
Objective List

North River High School

Define Objective and Assign Tasks

You must have School-level access (principal & process manager) to make changes to this page.
Other levels of access (state, district, coach) may view this page, but any changes to content cannot be saved.

Objective: **UD07** [View Tips](#)

Teachers will individualize instruction based on pre-test results to provide support for some students and enhanced learning opportunities for others. (94)

STEP 4 - INFORMATION
Level of Development or Implementation: **Limited Development**
Priority Score: **3**
Opportunity Score: **1**
Current level description: North River HS began an initiative in 2011-2012 to expand the concept of "personalized learning" to include individual success plans for each ninth grader. We initiated advisories for all 9th graders and advisors will continue with their advisory group into the coming year, expanding advisories to 10th grade. We used simple individual success plans but have not evaluated their impact on student outcomes. We need to spend time updating those plans and sharing them with the receiving teachers in each subject area. This is a challenge because our staff are assigned to multiple subject areas -- the amount of time needed to update every student's success plan, meet with the student and parent, and communicate the plan to other teachers is more than we have available. Help!

STEP 5 - CREATE A PLAN
1. Assign a team member to manage and monitor your work toward this objective.
2. Describe how it will look when this objective is being fully met in your School. Also describe the information you will need to provide evidence that this objective is fully met.

3. Establish a date by which your description above will be a reality.

4.

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Note: In the screenshot above, this is the view the Process Manager will see on the screen. However, it is different from the way the information is presented in a WORKSHEET (see Tools and Resources section).

The first part of creating the plan involves:

1. Assigning a team member to manage and monitor the objective.
2. Describe: how the objective will look when fully implemented, as well as, evidence to support full implementation?
3. Date by which the objective will be a reality.

Be sure to click the save button when finished.

After the first 3 steps have been saved, schools can now enter tasks. Create tasks in the plan for each primary objective by including (Screenshot and description below):

1. Creating one task in the series for the objective
2. Assigning a person or team
3. Establishing a date for the task to be completed

4. Recording notes from your discussion that will be useful

4. Edit information in items 1 - 3 above. Edit

5. Create a series of tasks that will lead to full implementation of this objective. Be sure to include tasks for gathering and analyzing the information needed to show evidence of full implementation.

Add a task

5 a. Create one task in the series for this objective.

The superintendent has asked the principal of Progressive High School to help our leadership team define their roles and responsibilities and coach them for the next 6 months.

5 b. Assign a person to be responsible for this task. - Select a Team Member - or Enter --> Morgan Barre

5 c. Establish a date this task will be completed. 07/01/2013

5 d. Record notes from your discussion that will be helpful to the person responsible for this task.

Progressive HS is seen as a leader in the state in improving student achievement and graduation.

Save Cancel

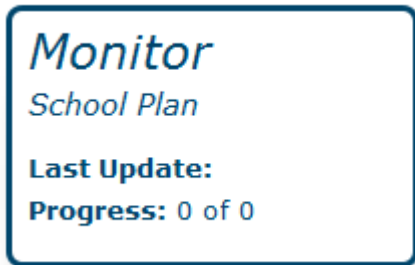
Be sure to click the save button when finished.

Repeat the process with each of the other priority objectives that constitute your improvement plan.

Your completed **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN** will consist of the tasks you create for all of the PRIORITY OBJECTIVES you selected.

Monitor School Plan

The last part of the cycle involves monitoring the school improvement plan. When ready, click on “Monitor School Plan” on the Main Menu.



Now that the plan has been created for the Objective, the leadership team and school staff assigned to the Objective work together to complete the assigned tasks. At the next meeting, the leadership team can review the list of Objectives and tasks to update the progress. Notice, the Objectives are once again color coded. The colors are explained at the top of the screen. Also shown for the Objective:

- ✓ the leadership team member that is assigned to the objective
- ✓ the date the team decided the objective would be complete
- ✓ how many tasks were created for the Objective
- ✓ what percentage of the tasks are complete
- ✓ the date when the Objective was met

Spring Lake Elementary School - Green Mountain Supervisory Union

[Video](#)

The objectives you see listed below are those you've chosen to include in your plan. Select an objective to update the progress of tasks, or to remove a task from an objective. Once all the tasks for an objective are complete, tell about the work that you've done.

Objectives shown in blue are either new objectives needing a plan and/or task created, or objectives with tasks that have not been completed.

Objectives shown in green have all tasks completed and the objective has been met.

Objectives shown in red need more tasks added to reach full implementation, or the team is undecided if the objective has been met.

☐ Hide completed plans

School Plan (10 total objectives)

ID	Select Objective to update task progress.	Assigned to	Target Date	Tasks	% Tasks Completed	Objective Met
CI02	<u>A team structure will be officially incorporated into the school improvement plan and school governance policy. (2805)</u>	Chester Benson	12/30/2012	2	100 %	12/20/2012
CIN03	<u>Instructional Teams will develop standards-aligned units of instruction for each subject and grade level. (88)</u>	Addison Newport	06/30/2014	3	0 %	
PTC03	<u>Professional development for teachers will include self-assessment related to indicators of effective teaching and classroom management. (69)</u>	Chelsea Bolton	06/30/2015	5	100 %	undecided

The Objective has been fully met.

If the team decides that the Objective is fully met, they will also need:

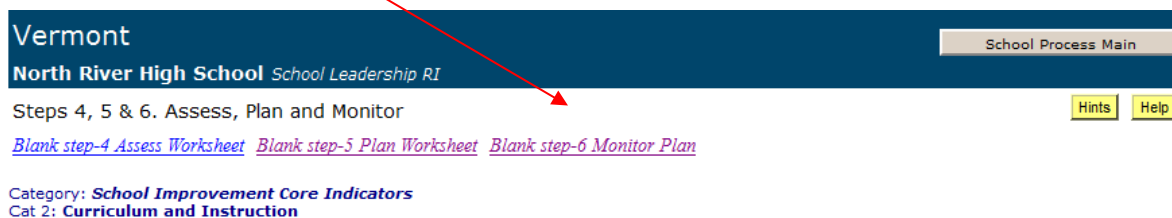
- to describe their experience in completing the objective,
- explain how they will sustain the objective, and give the evidence that the Objective has been fully met.

The evidence is to prove to themselves as a leadership team and to the stakeholders of the school (students, parents, teachers, school board, etc.) that the objective has been met. The screen to enter that information will appear when “The Objective has been fully met” is selected. Be sure and hit the “Save” button when finished entering the information.

Not ready to make a decision at this time.

In some cases, the leadership team may not be able to decide at the meeting whether the Objective has been fully met or not—perhaps team members are absent, or the evidence for completion has not been collected. Whatever the reason, if the team feels they are unable to decide when the tasks have been completed for that Objective, the system will simply mark that Indicator in Red until the team decides whether to mark it as fully met or to add tasks in Step 5.

Worksheets for Step 6: Monitor School Plan worksheets are available under “Plan Your Meeting” on the School Main Menu page to use during the team meeting.



For additional assistance with the Green Mountain Star tool or the process, contact your assigned School Effectiveness Coordinator.

Section 2: Tools for the Green Mountain Star Process

Meeting Norms

What are meeting norms?

Meeting Norms: Norms represent protocols and commitments developed by each team to guide members in working together. Norms help members clarify expectations regarding how they will work together to achieve their shared goals.

A Strategy for Establishing Meeting Norms

Ask members to think of a past negative experience they have had serving on a team or committee and to identify a specific behavior that prevented that group from being effective: for example, whining and complaining, arriving late and leaving early, being disengaged during the meetings, and so on. For each negative norm identified by members of team or meeting, establish a positive commitment statement (a norm) your group should adopt that, if everyone adhered to it, would prevent the past negative experience from recurring.

Tips for Establishing Meeting Norms

- Each meeting establishes its own norms.
- Norms are stated as commitments to act in certain ways rather than as beliefs.
- Norms are reviewed at the beginning and posted in the meeting location for each meeting.
- One norm should require the members in the meeting to assess its effectiveness at least twice during each school year. This assessment should include a review of members' adherence to meeting member norms and the need to add new norms.
- Less is more. A few key norms are better than a laundry list.
- Violation of norms should be addressed.

Examples of Meeting Norms

- We will maintain a positive tone at our meetings.
- We will not complain about a problem unless we can offer a solution.
- We will begin and end our meetings on time and stay fully engaged throughout
- We will contribute equally to the workload of this team.
- We will listen respectfully and consider matters from another's perspective.

Managing the Work

Guidance for Coaches and Teams:

Teams have developed some clever and creative strategies to manage the work of Indistar (Green Mountain Star) that build on the central underlying principle of the process – that those

being asked to make change must be the ones to determine what change is needed and to define how those changes will be enacted. The challenge of undertaking a comprehensive examination of all aspects of the school requires school leaders to engage all staff in the conversation about their work as educators. Thoughtful and candid professional conversation contributes to a culture of continuous professional learning, the most important and substantial benefit from participation in the Green Mountain Star process.

The big question teams ask is HOW to manage the work. At one end of the continuum, some schools opt for an “all for one; one for all” method, in which the whole school or a selected team conducts the assessment of every one of the indicators themselves, then shares their conclusions with the rest of the school community. In extremely small schools, in those undergoing significant changes or launching multiple initiatives at once, this may be the only approach possible. When there are few hands, “all hands” are required for such an important task.

The other end of the continuum can be thought of as the “divide and conquer” approach. Many variations of this method are possible, but what has worked best for many schools is to take advantage of existing structures (grade level teams, intervention teams, leadership teams, etc.) to distribute responsibility for conducting the assessment across the entire staff. The Coordinating Team (School Improvement Team/Leadership Team/Restructuring Team – choose your own title) can identify which indicators are best examined by which subgroups – instructional practice indicators by faculty and paraprofessionals; leadership and decision making indicators by the leadership team – and invite the subgroups to complete the Step 4 assessment worksheet for their assigned indicators.

In the “divide and conquer” approach, representatives from all the subgroups must come together to confirm the assessments and verify that the evidence is accurate across the whole school, for all teachers and students. There are multiple opportunities to provide additional evidence from new perspectives or to amend a finding

Sample Assignment Calendar:

Let’s look at an example for a school using the “divide and conquer” approach. VT schools are asked to complete their assessment of assigned and/or chosen indicators. Let’s assume the school has a 7 member school improvement team/restructuring team/ coordinating team/ steering committee including representatives of each grade and specialist group.

Here’s a possible schedule showing that each team will be responsible for a modest number of indicators each month. Using existing collaborative time, this schedule has been shown to be manageable in many schools. In a few cases, the SI Team met for paid time after or before school or substitutes were hired to allow the SI Team to do its work.

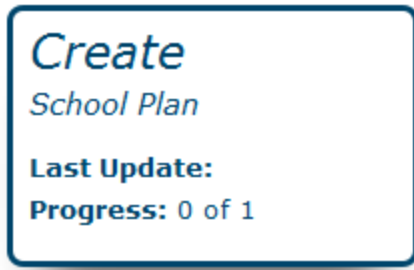
Who	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
SI Team	5	5	X*	X*
Teacher Team A	3	5	5	5
Teacher Team B	3	5	5	5
Teacher Team C	3	5	5	5
Staff Team D	3	5	5	5

Once teachers/staff members become familiar with the assessment protocol, they can complete an adequate assessment in anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes per indicator. Coaches can reinforce the recommendation that teams should spend NO MORE than 20 minutes on a single indicator. If conversation continues past 20 minutes, the discussion has likely gotten off track or another barrier is in the way. The indicator should be returned to the SI Team for their consideration.

Many schools have found it best to have the SI Team meet at least twice per month for at least 90 minutes each meeting. This allows them to carry out their tasks, which include monitoring the process by gathering feedback from the teachers and staff and assessing their own assigned indicators. Throughout the process, the SI Team will be reviewing the submissions from the teacher /staff teams to confirm that the findings are accurate across the school community.

However you choose to manage the work, remember that the professional conversation about each of the indicators, informed by the Wise Ways, is the critical outcome of this phase of the improvement process.

Guidance for Creating the School Plan



Schools using *Green Mountain Star* will create their school improvement and restructuring plans using the tool. Plans are developed from the indicators you have chosen for your plan and now become priority objectives. Create the Plan starts with the end in mind.

When you've selected the objectives that will be the target of your change efforts, log into *Green Mountain Star* system and

- select Plan your Meeting in the yellow box in the upper right of the School Main page
- select Worksheets from the dropdown menu
- select Steps 4, 5, 6 Assess, Plan, Monitor
- locate your chosen objective from the list
- select the Blank step 5 plan worksheet which is a generic worksheet

Assess, Plan and Monitor



[Blank Assess Worksheet](#) [Blank Plan Worksheet](#) [Blank Monitor Plan Worksheet](#)

Select a Section to display Indicators from that Group. Numbers shown are Indicators that need assessing or planning.

The blank page will open in a new tab. It will look like the following:

Plan

1. Assign a team member to manage and monitor your work toward this objective. _____
2. Describe how it will look when this objective is fully met. Also describe the information you will need to provide evidence that this objective is fully met.

3. Establish a date by which your description above will be a reality. ____ / ____ / ____

Tasks

- T-1. Create a series of tasks that will lead to full implementation of this objective. Be sure to include tasks for gathering and analyzing the information needed to show evidence of full implementation.

- T-1a. Assign a person to be responsible for this task. _____

- T-1b. Establish a date this task will be completed. ____ / ____ / ____

- T-1c. Record notes from your discussion that will be helpful to the person responsible for this task.

The first three questions (*see excerpt from the plan worksheet for IIA02, below*) you and your team need to answer include:

- assigning a person to manage the objective, someone on your improvement team who will take charge of tracking whether the activities described in the plan are taking place;
- describing what it will look like in your school when the objective is fully met, and
- setting a target date for full implementation (typically at the end of the school year)

The greatest benefit to your planning process will come from taking sufficient time to develop a clear and complete vision for what the objective will look like when fully met. Spend time discussing with your colleagues what a visitor might see in a year when you have fully enacted this objective. The clearer and more specific your response to question 2 the easier it will be to devise activities to reach that vision.

Begin with the Plan Worksheet and engage the group in discussion of question 2 and what it will look like when the objective is fully implemented.

In the discussion, specify what teachers will be doing, what administrators and support staff will be doing, and, most importantly, how the student learning experience will be different. The response to this question states your “theory of action” – i.e., the mechanism by which the goal of ‘improved student achievement’ will come about.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Indistar?

Indistar works alongside regional comprehensive centers to identify the challenges facing state education departments and to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students. Indistar calls upon its Scientific Council to combine relevant research and to generate ideas to meet challenges and solve problems. However, research-based concepts are not enough. Indistar's technical advisors and staff, with a variety of experience in schools districts, and state and federal education departments, pass the good ideas through the sieve of common sense, converting them into practical applications to place in the hands of the state agencies. Getting the desired results means sticking with the work, and Indistar maintains strong consulting and problem-solving support for the regional centers and the states.

2. Will all schools use this tool?

Schools that have been identified not making adequate yearly progress in year one school improvement, year two corrective action and year five corrective action will be required to write and monitor plans using Green Mountain Star. Those who used Green Mountain Star in 2012-2013 will continue to use the tool to monitor the implementation of their school improvement plan.

3. Who do we contact for more information, to begin the Green Mountain Star process, and for technical assistance (information, logins, passwords, etc.)?

Contact your assigned Vermont Agency of Education School Effectiveness Coordinator.

4. How do we know that participating in the Green Mountain Star will improve our school and increase student achievement?

Green Mountain Star includes indicators of evidence-based practices at the district, school, and classroom levels to improve student learning. Over the past several years, the tool has been implemented and undergone extensive research. As an example, Virginia districts using this tool have gained in both reading and mathematics in 26 out of 27 schools.

5. Will the number of key indicators change?

All schools assess a core set of indicators that is based off of the Vermont Multi-tiered System of Support Framework.

Supplemental sets of indicators for schools to choose from will allow them to have a richer, more focused discussion around an area of their choice. The sets that schools choose will be based on their AYP identifications, data-driven conversations with AOE School Effectiveness Coordinators, and coach (if applicable), and their analysis of core indicators.

6. What is the expected timeline?

Schools participating in Green Mountain Star will be held to meeting annual benchmarks. It is imperative that schools participating in the Green Mountain Star fulfill Title I School-wide Planning or Title I Program Improvement requirements within the specified timeline. Failure to do so could lead to noncompliance with federal legislation.

7. How do we use this tool to effectively impact instruction?

The majority of indicators focus on planning, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Educators plan and collaborate on the implementation of each indicator in their school. This process strengthens the instruction in the school and benefits students. Green Mountain Star has a research document called Wise Ways for each of the indicators. This provides schools with accessible current research.

8. How do the indicators of this tool relate to our school wide, program improvement and school improvement plans?

Crosswalks between the Green Mountain Star indicators, Global Best Practices Self-Assessment tool and Roots of Success: Effective Practices in Vermont Schools have been completed for consistency in research based best practices.

9. Will it link with other data systems?

This is a stand-alone system with no direct link to other state data systems.

10. How will the public see the data?

All schools on the Green Mountain Star system have a password protected site so it is not accessible to the general public. However, each school has a guest account that can be shared with all members of the community. The guest access information can be found on the school's dashboard.

Write a Goal Statement for Each Cluster

Once the areas for improvement that will have the greatest impact on the school's success is determined, craft a goal statement that describes the outcome of fully and effectively achieving the objectives in the cluster (*A piece of advice: Writing in committee is a painful exercise; draft individually or in pairs and review, revise in groups*).

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) goals can be challenging to write. A practical way to check whether the goal statements are SMART is to invite others to examine them and answer the following questions:

- ✓ Does this goal address key areas our school needs to change?
- ✓ Does this goal describe what we need to do to improve our ability to help our students achieve success?
- ✓ Does this goal clearly describe what the outcome will be if our efforts are successful?

Here are some examples of goals and the objectives supporting them:

Example 1:

GOAL: To improve student achievement by adopting (or enhancing, reinforcing) a response to intervention approach for grades 4 through 8 in mathematics which will provide high quality core instruction and targeted intervention and/or enrichment based on student data.

Objectives (Indicators) –

IIIA07: All teachers differentiate assignments in response to individual student performance on pre-tests and other methods of assessment.

IIB04: Teachers individualize instruction based on pre-test results to provide support for some students and enhanced learning opportunities for others.

IIIA17: All teachers re-teach when necessary.

IIIC05: All teachers use a variety of instructional modes.

Example 1	
Specific	"student achievement"; "response to intervention"; "mathematics"; "core instruction"; "intervention/enrichment"
Measurable	(none listed; could insert mention of local and/or state assessments, suggest an expected rate of improvement – i.e., "10% increase in Index score" but will need to show evidence such a gain is reasonable)
Achievable	Objectives describe activities within the scope and range of MTSS-RtII activities adopted by other schools
Realistic	Focusing on "core instruction" is a do-able endeavor, builds on existing expectations, not requiring dramatic change in staff skill
Timely	Reinforcing core instruction can occur immediately, does not require long planning time; instructional practices do not require "new" knowledge for staff, just reinforcement and renewed focus

Example 2:

GOAL: To improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness by engaging teachers in ongoing, embedded professional learning within a revised team structure which establishes specific benchmarks for implementing instructional practices that increase student learning.

Objectives –

ID03: All teams operate with work plans for the year and specific work products to produce.

IID08: Instructional Teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instructional strategies.

IF08: Professional development for the whole faculty includes assessment of strengths and areas in need of improvement from classroom observations of indicators of effective teaching.

Example 2	
Specific	"student achievement"; "teacher effectiveness"; "engage"; "professional learning"; "team structure"; "specific benchmarks"
Measurable	(none listed; could insert mention of local and/or state assessments for student achievement gains; could insert mention of a measure of implementation such as walk-through or surveys of enacted curricula)
Achievable	If ID01 is already in place, other actions required of teams are within a reasonable scope of work; pd aligned with indicators of effective practice may required some modifications of typical expectations but not beyond the scope of reasonableness
Realistic	Teams often exist and expecting them to declare a work plan is a do-able expectations
Timely	Improving the impact of instructional teams can demonstrate changes in teaching practice, professional climate, curriculum alignment/quality and student achievement soon after implementation.

The process of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment is a critical first step in developing a credible plan for the kind of change required of schools in improvement status. For *Green Mountain Star* schools, completing the review of current practice guided by the indicators of effective practice represents both an end point and a starting point. If the school district is provided a Coach, s/he can provide more direct assistance if needed, or move forward with the support team. The activities described in this guidance are not required but are suggested for assisting with the planning process.

A Few More Suggestions:

1. For each GOAL, aim for no more than 3 or 4 PRIORITY OBJECTIVES. Some minor objectives in your cluster can become tasks within one of the major PRIORITY OBJECTIVES.
2. Aim for 2 to 5 tasks for each PRIORITY OBJECTIVE. Keep a moderate level of detail. You can develop more detailed "work plans" when you begin implementation.
3. Use the INDICATOR CHECKLIST REPORT to produce reports for the specific indicators in your plan. Other reports, like the Comprehensive Plan Report, include all the indicators you assessed, whereas the INDICATOR CHECKLIST REPORT details *only those you selected as PRIORITY*.

Check out examples of plans at the sample site in *Green Mountain Star*, log on to Indistar® using login: vtsample and password: vtsample. <http://www.indistar.org/>



Practice Assessing an Indicator for Schools Using the Rapid Improvement Indicators

Before filling in the online assessment, pick an indicator from the **resources** page and please use Appendix 5 to help guide your practice session.

Resources School Process Main

My State: Vermont Choose a state to view their selection.

System Instructions and Tutorials **Indicators, Wise Ways, and Rubrics** **Other Resources**

Level: School Group: School Leadership RI [Complete Indicator List](#) [Complete Wise Ways® List](#)

Filter(s) Choose a filter to narrow your Indicator search. ☒ Key Indicators only

apply Indicator filter remove filter

Vermont - School - School Leadership RI - Key Indicators count - 2

School Improvement Core Indicators **Curriculum and Instruction**

Display Categories Choose a Wise Ways® or Rubric to display, if available.

Indicator	Wise Ways®	Rubric
CIN01 All teachers are guided by a document that aligns common core standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (2775)		
CIN03 Instructional Teams develop standards-aligned units of instruction for each subject and grade level. (88)	WW	

1. What do the terms in the indicator mean?

- Review the description of the indicator in the Wise Ways.
- Examine the terms in view of school culture and context, for example
 - What do we mean by 'leadership team' or 'instructional team'?
 - What are our school's/district's 'indicators of effective teaching'?
 - What do we use as 'criteria for mastery' and do all teachers apply them similarly?

Agree on the meaning of the terms in the indicator so all are considering the same concepts when answering the assessment questions.

2. How does our implementation of this practice compare with the description of 'best practice'?

- a. Review the research and description of the indicator (Wise Ways).
- b. Discuss how your school's culture and context compares with the Wise Ways description.
- c. Agree on a rating of your current level of implementation compared to the ideal – Full, Limited, None.

If the team concludes 'limited' implementation, or 'no implementation but will include in the plan', move on to consider these questions:

3. What is the **priority** of this practice for your organization's improvement?

- a. How much would this practice – if fully and effectively implemented -- contribute to improved student achievement?
 - Choose a High Priority rating if its implementation offers substantial promise of improved student learning, more effective teacher practice, and/or more efficient organizational operations.
- b. Is this practice something you've been striving for already? I.e., are you in year 2 of implementation of a particular curriculum or intervention?
 - If so, give it a High priority rating.
- c. Does this practice complement existing reform initiatives in your school or district?
 - If so, rate it a High priority.
- d. Did you identify this practice as a likely 'root cause' of student achievement gaps in your school?
 - If yes, give this a priority rating of '3'.

4. How would you rate the **opportunity** for your school or district to implement this practice?

- a. Would it be relatively 'easy' to adopt practices described in this indicator? I.e., are the infrastructure elements in place (decision making processes, data collected and accessible?)
- b. Would it be relatively 'hard' to establish these systems or practices? I.e., substantial resource limitations (time, personnel, expertise); restrictive regulations or contradictory policies
- c. Rate the opportunity from 1 to 3 (3 for 'easy'; 1 for 'hard') based on your conversation.

5. Fill in the **evidence** for your rating this practice.

- a. Use the answers to the questions above and your team's conversation to draft a paragraph describing why you believe your ratings of implementation, priority, and opportunity are accurate.
 - Does your evidence reflect the perspective of all staff, and is it accurate for all schools, teachers, students?

Access Level Descriptions

Every login is assigned according to an access level. The access level determines the privileges that each person has to view information, edit information, or enter coaching comments. In Green Mountain Star, these privileges are carefully differentiated.

Take time to review the roles and responsibilities of each person associated with Green Mountain Star. Please note that the Vermont Agency of Education has decided to not use the rapid improvement leader model for the school improvement process. One of the more important roles in Green Mountain Star is the role of the process manager.

Access Level	Who Uses it	What is it for
State Administrators	State Administrators	Can view the work of both district and school teams but can offer <i>Coaching Comments</i> only at the district level.
District	Superintendent and District Process Manager	Can view and edit the district team's work and respond to <i>Coaching Comments</i> from the state. Can view the school team's work and can offer <i>Coaching Comments</i> . * The district level access also has the option of using the dashboard for additional reporting purposes
District Consultant	Consultant/Coach working with the district	Can view the work of both district and school teams to which they've been assigned but can offer <i>Coaching Comments</i> only at the district level.
District Liaison	District person working with the school team	Can view the work of the school team(s) to which they've been assigned and can offer <i>Coaching Comments</i> only at the school level.
School	Principal and School Process Manager	Can view and edit the work of the school team and respond to <i>Coaching Comments</i> from the District Liaison, School Consultant, or District. * The school level access also has the option of using the dashboard for additional reporting purposes.
School Consultant	Consultant/Coach working with the school	Can view the work of the school team and can offer <i>Coaching Comments</i> .

- For example, follow the instructions below for an in-depth look at the role of the process manager:
 1. In Green Mountain Star, click on *Resources and Reports*.
 2. Select *Resources*.
 3. On the **Systems, Instructions, & Tutorials** tab, select **Login Access Descriptions**.

This is a document that describes the roles within the *Green Mountain Star* system.

One example is the Process Manager: Each team needs a Process Manager, a person who interfaces with the web system, prepares agendas and worksheets, distributes documents to team member in advance of meetings, and enters the team's minutes and work products into the system. The Process Manager also distributes coaching comments and Wise Ways research briefs to team members and enters the team's response to coaching comments in the system to maintain a dialogue with the Coach. The superintendent and principal have the same access privileges to the system as the district Process Manager and school Process Manager respectively.

When finished, click on the "School Process Main" tab in the right hand corner to return to the main menu.

Check the Work

Have the instructional and organizational practices that are the real barriers to our students' success been identified?

Consider these activities to “check the work” –



1. Print the report, **List of Indicators Included in the Plan** from the Green Mountain Star system.

Step 1. School Registration	This report holds registration information for the school, principal, and process manager.
Step 2. School Information	Here you will see the demographic, personnel and enrollment information as entered by the school.
School Assessment	This report shows assessment information for state and standardized tests as entered by the school.
Step 3. School Team Members	Information pertaining to the members of the School Improvement Team including the principal, the process manager, and others chosen from the school or community to be part of the leadership team is displayed here.
Step 4. List of Indicators Included in Plan	This report holds a list of all assessed indicators that will be included in your plan.
Detailed Report of Assessed Indicators	This report shows each assessed indicator, including its level of development, opportunity and priority scores, as well as evidence of current implementation.

Then

Before printing, SORT the list by INDEX score by clicking on the arrow next to the INDEX header so the indicators list from highest rating to lowest.

2. Distribute the list of indicators to the team and/or other faculty members.
Discuss the relative index score of the practices.

Are any of these practices more critical to our success than the position indicates?

Do the practices with the highest index scores represent the **greatest barriers** to our students' success?

Given what we know about the student outcomes, which practices will target the groups struggling to reach proficiency (“inputs” related to “outcomes” question)?

3. The team should consider the results of the discussion by asking probing and clarifying questions regarding the indicators identified as possibly less or more important to the school's success than the initial ranking. Some probing and clarifying questions to ask:

Is the data/evidence for this rating strong?

If not, should the team build into the plan a strategy for collecting better evidence?

What does the student achievement data confirm/contradict in the ranking of these practices?

If, the instructional practices rate as "fully implemented," student achievement should be proficient, is that the case?

Finally, in reviewing the list, is the team confident the essential areas identified for change will achieve desired student learning outcomes?

After Check the Work activities are completed, the team will have determined which Green Mountain Star indicators will provide the objectives for the school improvement plan. When completed, teams should go into ASSESS and CHANGE any priority listings (or opportunity) to reflect the conclusions of this discussion, PLUS add any new evidence that emerged during the conversation.

Cluster Similar Indicators

One likely outcome of the **Check the Work** activity is the emergence of groups of similar indicators. In *Green Mountain Star*, indicators convert into objectives, and objectives are subsets of goals. This step in the planning process asks the team to examine objectives (indicators) that are similar and begin to write a GMS goal that reflects the intent and meaning of the cluster of objectives.

Consider these strategies to cluster the objectives:

1. Think “affinity diagram” – one possible approach is to create a wall size map of similar indicators.
 - ✓ print the priority indicators in large font and cut them apart
 - ✓ “deal out” the indicators to the working group
 - ✓ invite participants to tape their indicators on the wall next to/below similar indicators
 - ✓ once all the indicators are grouped, invite participants to review the groupings and move indicators to other clusters as needed (*if disagreements on an indicator, invite discussion and reach a compromise or consensus*)
 - ✓ reach consensus that the clusters represent the issues the school needs to address
2. If there are clusters the school team does not consider major concerns or issues, then the planning team needs to consider if any of those clusters are being addressed through school-wide initiatives and/or projects.
3. If the team has more than 3 clusters, review them and make a determination about which groups will be included in the plan. The chosen groups need to represent changes that will positively and successfully impact the learning environment and professional practice at the school.

Note: This exercise is OUTSIDE the GMS system, it is not part of the tool but rather an activity the team does on its own.

When the team has finished, it’s time to develop the improvement plan that includes all of these objectives.

Indicators in Action



HOME COURSES TOOLS & TEMPLATES LINKS

Welcome to Indicators in Action!

Indicators in Action is produced by the [Academic Development Institute](#).

Based primarily on ADI's research syntheses, Indicators in Action provides an explanation of indicators of effective practice.

Video clips of:

- principals
- teachers
- teacher teams
- and school teams

show the indicators "in action".

Indicators in Action is ideal for:

- professional development
- faculty meetings
- workshops
- and as a tutorial for individual educators.

Start Here



Access the Mini-sode Video Index of





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Scan the QR code below to access the Indicators in Action:

